Advantages of combining both Children and Adult Medicaid Benefits in one program.

Unrestricted access to care underlies the success of any dental program, and in Colorado this means getting both children and adults in to see the dentist on a regular basis. This is best accomplished by consolidating child and adult programs under a single vendor. In fact, this model of program administration is pervasive. We are not aware of any state in which child and mandated adult Medicaid benefits are managed through separate vendors.

States adopt this single vendor model for practical reasons. It benefits members and providers, and at the same time benefits the business objectives of the state.

Benefits for members

Just as commercial plan members select a family dentist, Medicaid parents can visit the same dentist as their child does. The majority of children see general dentists, making it easy for the parent to see the same dentist.

By selecting a single vendor for child and adult dental programs, HCPF can create this family-centered environment for program participants. A single vendor means a single provider network, a key feature of successful programs serving multiple audiences.

Under a single vendor model, families will enjoy unconstrained access to dentists. This would not be the case under a dual vendor model where families may or may not enjoy access to the same dentist. This not only raises logistical concerns for families, but health concerns as well. Having to schedule appointments with two dentists rather than one, and having to arrange transportation for two trips rather than potentially one, works against the goal of easy access. It creates an unnecessary barrier. Parents will be more inclined to seek regular dental care if they have a single source for their families' dental needs.

Selecting a regular dentist lies at the core of the dental home concept, which many states have adopted to promote lifelong patient/dentist relationships. Dental homes promote the establishment of a primary dentist the way families often choose primary doctors. Repeat trips to the same dentist create an environment of trust, and this in turn encourages continued preventive visits. By selecting a single dental vendor for its child and adult programs, HCPF would make it possible families to choose a single dentist for a lifetime of oral health care.

Benefits for providers

In a recent Pew Charitable Trust article, "In Search of Dental Care: Two Types of Dentist Shortages Limit Children's Access to Care," dentists cite burdensome administrative procedures as one of the primary reasons for not joining Medicaid programs. In states that have transitioned from a multiple vendor model of care delivery (health plans) to a single dental benefits administrator, provider satisfaction and participation increased. Having just one dental vendor to deal with for claim submissions, authorizations, payments, and day-to-day support made their lives a lot easier.

Providers are the backbone of any dental program. Should HCPF select a single dental vendor for its child and adult programs, it would positively impact provider recruitment and retention efforts. The same principles apply for states that retain ownership of the network. Satisfied

providers are productive providers, and the best way to satisfy providers is to permit their offices to operate at peak efficiency. Having just one vendor to deal with greatly simplifies their administrative processes.

Benefits for HCPF and Colorado tax payers

HCPF will realize cost savings and an administrative simplicity by choosing a single vendor to manage its child and adult programs. And if it selects an experienced Medicaid vendor, the cost savings will be even greater.

Administrative simplicity

A single dental vendor reduces the administrative burden for HCPF staff. Benefits include:

- A single contact who understands the mechanics of both programs
- A single reporting package that tracks the performance of both programs
- One eligibility feed that reduces the burden on HCPF IT staff
- A simplified audit process
- One combined implementation process

Cost savings through lower rate

HCPF would realize a reduction in costs as a result of a lower ASO rate. Most dental vendors base ASO pricing on the number of members in the program. The more members in the program, the lower the rate. A single vendor managing both child and adult dental programs could offer a lower rate based on the increased volume of membership. Savings realized through a lower ASO rate can be funneled back into the program or back into taxpayers' pockets.

Cost savings through selecting a vendor specializing in Medicaid programs

An experienced Medicaid program manager with a claims processing system designed to accommodate the rigors of Medicaid program administration will ensure that policies are enforced, especially those related to medical necessity criteria.

And because commercial program administration differs greatly from Medicaid program administration, some vendors are unable to manage the cost of the program – from both administrative and claims processing perspectives. Such was the case in Texas where the state and a commercial vendor mutually agreed to end their relationship.

Summary

A single vendor model holds significant benefits for HCPF the way it does for other states that have adopted it. It promotes a family-centered environment for program participants, simplifies participation for providers, and lowers program costs. We urge you to explore the advantages of this model as you prepare to implement your child and adult dental programs in 2014.